

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Water Shortage Situation and the City's Water Conservation Ordinance**

**Q1 What is a water shortage condition?**

**A1** A water shortage occurs when it is projected that the City may potentially not be able to meet all current or future water requirements.

**Q2 Why are there potential water shortages and what triggers these situations?**

**A2** Potential water shortages are due to the lack of availability of imported water supplies provided by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and/or insufficient local water supplies to meet projected water demands. To date, all declared water shortage conditions in the City have been the result of severe drought conditions, which have reduced the availability of MWD imported water supplies.

**Q3 Where does our water come from?**

**A3** Currently, approximately two-thirds of our annual water requirements are derived from imported water deliveries from the MWD. MWD supplies come from two primary sources - the State Water Project (SWP) in northern California and the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) system. In a normal year, MWD receives approximately 60% of its water from the SWP and the other 40% from the CRA. The balance of Torrance Municipal Water supplies are produced from local water sources including groundwater wells, a groundwater desalter project, and recycled supplies for non-potable industrial and landscape irrigation purposes.

**Q4 Who decides there is a water shortage condition?**

**A4** A water shortage condition is declared by the City Council based on a number of considerations including a Metropolitan Water District declaration of a potential shortfall and/or mandatory allocation of imported water supplies, a State of California emergency drought alert or some other major event that could result in a potential water shortage in the community.

**Q5 What is the current situation?**

**A5** Earlier this year, the MWD declared mandatory reductions in imported deliveries to member agencies, including Torrance. On July 21, 2009, the City Council adopted a Resolution declaring a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage in accordance with the City's existing Water Conservation Ordinance (No. 3717). The Level 1 condition prescribes additional water use restrictions in addition to those permanent restrictions currently in place including:

- Limiting outdoor watering to three days per week
- Prohibiting outdoor watering between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Requiring that all leaks be fixed within 7 days

In addition, the Resolution calls upon all customers to reduce water usage by 10%.

**Q6 Will rate penalties be assessed as part of the water shortage program?**

**A6** All customers will be receiving a usage target on their water bills based on average or historical water use. At this time, penalty rates will not be charged. However, the program will be closely monitored, and if the current program falls short of the prescribed target, penalty rates may be considered.

**Q7 How long will this situation last and who is affected?**

**A7** The current drought has been going on for three years, and it is uncertain when it will end. The Level 1 water shortage condition will last at least through the end of June 2010. However, even if the current drought ends next year, it is probable that water supply shortages are not a short term situation. In addition to reduced snow packs in key watersheds, a number of environmental issues and judicial rulings have significantly reduced the amount of water that can be delivered from the State Water Project in northern California. Continuous conservation will be needed to ensure the sustainability and reliability of our water supplies.

Almost all cities and water agencies in California are impacted by the water shortage situation. Water supply is a critical issue not just in California but worldwide.

**Q8 What are we doing to mitigate water shortages in the future?**

**A8** At the local level, Torrance Municipal Water is planning to diversify its water supply portfolio by developing additional local water resources including: drilling new groundwater wells; expanded use of recycled water; enlargement of a groundwater desalter project; and participation in managed groundwater storage projects. Diversification of our water sources will reduce the present reliance on vulnerable imported water sources and mitigate the impacts of future droughts. Within the next 10 years, we project our reliance on imported supplies will be cut in half, as new local sources are developed. Investment in local water resources will improve supply reliability, and will also be the most cost effective approach for stabilizing water costs and rates in the future. In addition, sustained conservation also needs to be a key component of a balanced water management strategy to enhance overall water supply reliability.

On a statewide level, there needs to be a comprehensive solution to issues related to the environmentally sensitive Sacramento Bay-Delta region, which impacts deliveries of imported water from the State Water Project. A number of initiatives are being advanced to address the Bay-Delta situation, but it may take years until viable solutions are implemented. Therefore, an integrated water management approach emphasizing diversification of our water supply portfolio and sustained conservation offer the best options for ensuring the reliability of our water supplies now and in the future.

**Q9 What are the requirements of the Water Conservation Ordinance (No. 3717)?**

**A9** The current Level 1 Water Conservation Ordinance prohibits certain wasteful water use practices. Most of these measures are permanent. The water use restrictions include the following:

- Prohibits outdoor watering between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.\*
- Limits outdoor watering to 3 days per week
- Obligates customers to fix leaks within 7 days
- Prohibits the washing down of exterior surfaces
- Prohibits washing of vehicles, boats, etc., without a self-closing shut-off valve
- Prohibits excessive runoff from lawn or landscape areas
- Prohibits watering for more than 15 minutes per station
- Requires that all fountains, ponds, and decorative water features have a recirculating system

\* This measure is to reduce evaporation during the hottest part of the day and prevent the wind from blowing irrigation water away.

- Q10 Does the Conservation Ordinance apply to all residents and businesses in Torrance?**  
**A10** Yes. The Ordinance applies to everyone within the City, even if they receive water service from a water provider other than Torrance Municipal Water.
- Q11 Where can I obtain copies of the Water Conservation Ordinance and Resolution?**  
**A11** These documents and other related information are posted on the City's website at [www.TorranceCA.gov/publicworks](http://www.TorranceCA.gov/publicworks).
- Q12 How do I report an observed violation of the Water Conservation Ordinance?**  
**A12** You can report this matter by accessing our website at [www.TorranceCA.gov/publicworks](http://www.TorranceCA.gov/publicworks) under the "Spotlight" heading titled "Report Water Waste Here." Violations can also be reported by City Gram or by calling the Public Works Department at 310-781-6900.
- Q13 What will happen to my lawn if I only water three days per week?**  
**A13** If you follow a regular water schedule, your lawn and landscape should remain healthy. Most customers over water their landscapes by 50% or more. Approximately 40% of all water used by single family customers in Torrance is for landscape irrigation. Sensible watering will provide you with a healthy landscape and will save substantial amounts of limited water supplies.
- Q14 Will violators of the Water Conservation Ordinance be fined?**  
**A14** The City will send out written notification letters indicating the apparent violations, and, when needed, we will make site visitations to investigate the situation. Repeated violators are subject to administrative fines.
- Q15 What programs does the City offer to assist customers?**  
**A15** Torrance Municipal Water offers free 1.5 gpm showerheads, interior water conservation kits, and low flow faucet aerators to all residents and businesses in Torrance. Call our Customer Service Office (CSO is located at 18236 Prairie Avenue) at 310-921-6449 for more information. Torrance Municipal Water is also offering free California-friendly landscape instructional classes, which will be resuming this fall. Torrance Municipal will also be offering limited auditing services upon request. Consult our website at [www.TorranceCa.gov/publicworks](http://www.TorranceCa.gov/publicworks) for further information. We also offer a variety of conservation materials, which can be obtained by calling 310-781-6900.